

# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## John Connolly

John Connolly is the president of the Galway Art Club and has been for the past 20 years having agreed to a 3 year term back in the early 1990's! John is regarded as a well established artist and his paintings are well sought after and with John's encouragement, the Galway Art Club contribute paintings for Positive Ageing Week.

While John loves his art, it's not all about painting as he has travelled on foreign trips with some members of the Art Club for over 20 years (pre covid) and also went to far flung places with another group of friends which he calls the "Galway Gang" who are of a similar vintage and have made their way to places like Russia, Egypt, India and China. It's the one aspect he really misses since the pandemic and says he will get back on the road next year come what may.

Meanwhile John (aged 72) has 2 children and 3 grandchildren living in Headford and Kiltullagh, Athenry whom he is devoted to and enjoys thoroughly. In fact John says he is completely happy with life. Having retired from Brooks after 49 years working he has such a positive attitude and lives life to the full.



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## Maura Cronin

Maura Cronin (Clifden), has no time for ageing. Well into her eighties, Maura, who is originally from Dublin but had spent many years in the USA, has settled well into St. Joseph's, a Cluid housing programme for independent living in Clifden. A highly active and stimulating lady, she is rarely idle, sharing her ideas and interests and encouraging others to do the same; she is always on the go. She shops online, attends classes and easily navigates the web for information and back up support and she keeps in touch with family and friends. Maura is highly self motivated and has many hobbies. She loves travel, cooking, reading, dressmaking. She explores age appropriate exercise programmes and is delighted to have lost weight and improved her fitness. She also enjoys a quick sea swim during the warmer months. A picture of contentment, she loves the feelings of calm and weightlessness as she floats on her back.

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## Mike Monaghan

In his hi-vis vest, helmet and cycling shorts, Mike Monaghan is a familiar sight around the highways and byways of Headford in Co Galway. Clocking up to 40 km a day, he makes for a very fit eighty one year old.

A latecomer to cycling, he began more than 13 years ago, and has barely stopped since. A regular in the Croi Corrib Cycle, he would often clock up over 110 km from start to over 110km from start to finish round the lake.

Mike raised €2,900 for COPE Galway last year when he took part in a sponsored cycle. A native of Headford, he was a farmer all his working life, a pursuit Mike enjoyed for 11 months of the year, but he says he found the month of March hell - 'cows calving, lambing - it was hard to keep up with March!'

Mike is married to Marian and has a son, Mike, and a daughter, Helen. He says his son is also an avid cyclist, with the two of them having competed twice in the 100km Great Dublin Bike Ride.



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## Gay Christ

Gay Christ lives on the beautiful shores of Lough Corrib, Co Galway.

Originally from Germany, Ireland has been her home for 36 years. Gay worked as a teacher before moving to Ireland with her husband Ralph. She has always had a deep interest in health and wellbeing, leading her to study homeopathy and massage therapy.

Gay joined a yoga class at the age of 45 years developing a passion which has continued since. She trained as a yoga teacher at the age of 50. Sadly, Ralph passed away in 2008 and her daily yoga practice helped her to cope at this very difficult time. She was involved with an active retirement group, and facilitated regular exercise and yoga classes. Then, 10 years ago, Gay offered yoga classes (10 a week) to the local community from her own home, as an opportunity to give something back, as she is very thankful for the support she has always received. 3 years ago, she continued with her lifelong learning and took lessons on the harp. She also loves archery, and practices this in her beautiful garden. Gay has a kayak, and up to last year was a regular sight in it on Lough Corrib. Her love of nature and the outdoors is very evident.

She strongly feels that having a focus in life is very important and age should not matter. Gay is 81 years of age.



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## Muriel Silke

Muriel Silke is one of the founding members of the Original Blackrock ladies swimmers, who describe themselves as the “No Robes, No Wetsuits” gang. The ladies range in age from 65 to 86 and most of them started swimming lessons together in Leisureland about 33 years ago, then crossed the road over to the sea and they have been swimming daily ever since. Muriel is described as “The Boss” because they say she is a great organiser, she keeps them motivated, she is kind, thoughtful and great fun.

Muriel moved to Galway from Limerick, and has 5 children and 12 grandchildren. As well as her daily swim, she plays golf and bridge and walks nonstop, and she also finds time to volunteer with University College Hospital as a meet and greet person.

Muriel and the Blackrock ladies swimmers have a love of life and swimming and their daily dip keeps them strongly connected to one another for the chat and the fun. Muriel says they are like a family and provide great support for each other, which is so evident across the whole swimming community in Galway.



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## Deasun O'Seanain

Deasun O'Seanain (Des) has volunteered with Age Action for many years. He is fluent in the Irish language, and facilitates a monthly gathering of Gaelgoiri at the [#AgeAction](#) office. These events are very informal, and also offer an opportunity for music, song and poetry. Des plays a variety of instruments, for example the flute, the bodhran and the harmonica. He has played for community groups such as Sonas in Mervue and also [#CroinaGaillimhe](#).

Des has many interests such as travelling, yoga and art. He regularly attends classes to brush up his knowledge.

In the past he has worked on a Kibbutz and travelled extensively. He has a particular interest in the world of film and regularly works as a film extra in Galway and beyond. He loves the buzz of being on set and meeting all the cameramen, sound engineers and producers. He was an extra in the Maamtrasna Murders and many other productions.

Des was educated in England but once he discovered the Irish language he was hooked. He also has a keen interest in Scots Gaidhlig. He has been to Summer School on the Isle of Skye on a couple of occasions. Des is 73 years old.





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## Michael McDonagh

Michael McDonagh or Mike Poppy as he prefers to be called, was born in 1935. He lives in Caladh Gholaim, Lettermullin, Connemara. Neighbours could meet Mike on his way to the seashore to soak his feet in the salt water, one of his many rituals he swears by. He busies himself with his rockery tending flowers, trimming the briars and picking up any trash to keep the area green and beautiful. He likes strong tea, makes his own brown bread daily & eats porridge, though he admits to indulging in sausages as a treat occasionally! He was diagnosed with diabetes and hypertension fourteen years ago but was determined to take control of his health and not allow these diseases to control him. For exercise, he walks his dog Puppy Lilly and cat Sox, a quarter of a mile every morning and evening, no matter the weather.

In summer, he rows his currach and fishes for mackerel and when he is lucky to catch a few he shares his bounty with his neighbours. He is actively involved in the community; he shares stories of growing up in rural Connemara as well as folklore and singing on Radio na Gaeltachta. According to Mike Poppy, the most important thing for Healthy Ageing is to keep moving, immerse yourself in the beauty of Nature and do something daily to nurture Her.



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## Olivia Dooley and Patricia O'Callaghan

Olivia Dooley and Patricia O'Callaghan of the Headford Yarnbombers. The Headford Yarnbombers started as part of The Nesting Lark in 2016. Since then they have regularly brought creativity, fun and an element of surprise to events and areas of the town.

Throughout the pandemic they have brightened the town and the lives of the people in it, with installations of flowers and butterflies, valentines, a giant christmas tree, Santys and leprechauns. Most recently they have celebrated the characters of the local community by recreating them in yarn in the centre of the town.

Olivia and Patricia have been core members of the Yarnbombers from the start. Their skills and enthusiasm are only matched by their openness to new crazy ideas and their sense of fun. Whether in person, giving a word of encouragement at a sit and knit event, or online via the very active Whatsapp group, both Olivia and Patricia are central to the Headford Yarnbombers and their activities. Between them they created the majority of the 'mini me' installation and we feel they are a wonderful example of living positively, expressing yourself creatively and contributing to your community for people of any age.





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## Damian Spring

Damian has been swimming in the sea for the past 40 years. He meets up with a group of around 10 pals for a daily swim, and he loves the banter, and the flask of tea with his buddies.

Damian is also a talented musician playing the piano and keyboards, and along with three others, he has been entertaining the residents of St Marys nursing home for past 10 years where they play once a week.

Damian is living in Knocknacarra, but is originally from Tuam. He reads extensively in particular local history, and he has a great interest in European cities, in particular Vienna. Damian also undertook a degree in law, and since retiring, he has been attending Yoga at the Croi centre in Newcastle as well as the Back to Fitness programme. Damian says we're blessed living in Galway with Connemara and its wonderful beaches on our doorstep and everything else it has to offer. There's rarely an idle moment in his life!



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## Mike Kavanaugh

Mike Kavanaugh is nothing short of a miracle.

Back in 2017 having suffered a major stroke, Mike was being fed through a tube and was pretty much immobile. But he followed the medics advice, did his exercises, and never gave up hope, and now at 90 years of age, Mike is the picture of health and vitality. So much so that he is now back to his daily routine of swimming in Blackrock, summer and winter where he is well known and referred to as “Mike the Dub”.

Mike’s life long career was as a confectioner salesman and when he wasn’t supplying the neighbourhood children with Iced Caramels, he was off travelling the world with his beautiful wife Ann, her sister Patsy, and her best friend Noreen – holidays which he remembers with great fondness and fun. Mike and Ann have 4 children who cherish him dearly. His son Ian accompanies him across two bus routes daily on his swim, and they both walk back together to Eyre Square taking in a coffee and sweet cake on the way. Mike credits his good health and vitality to his positive attitude and love of life which oozes out of him, and he also says that the good food he gets from COPE Galway every day is delicious and helped to bring him back to good health, and he thanks the volunteers who deliver on the Renmore route.



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## Bririe Willers

Anyone from South Galway will be familiar with the amazing woman that is Bridie Willers. A former member of Galway County Council, since retiring from politics she has been deeply involved in voluntary work in Gort and surrounding areas.

Bridie has been an active member for many years of Gort and District Lions Club. From her years involved in politics she has acquired an insight into humanitarian need in our community. And she understands the importance of confidentiality respecting the dignity and privacy of those she assists which forms the basis of everything she does.

Always busy and on the go Bridie has a keen interest in heritage and has been involved in the Castledaly Kilchreest Heritage group for many years. Geneology is a pastime that fascinates Bridie and that she finds extremely rewarding . An avid gardener, she says that her garden was her saviour during Covid and helped her deal with the isolation of lockdown.

While many will be familiar with these facets of Bridie's life, it is the work that she does quietly and confidentially behind the scenes which is truly inspiring. She is always available and willing to help others, providing support, practical assistance and to lend an ear. Always one to tell it like it is she is an inspiration, a true treasure and someone to be celebrated during Positive Ageing Week 2021.





# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Mary Cronin

Mary is originally from Woodford, however, she has spent most of her adult life working and volunteering in Limerick. This year Mary finally retired and relocated to her beloved native Galway now living in Claregalway.

From a young age, Mary had a passion for athletics and was actively involved in a volunteer capacity with the setting up of a womens running club in Limerick in the early 1960s, one of the first in the country. Since then, Mary has spent almost 40 years as a competitor and volunteer with Athletics Ireland, and one of her proudest moments was when, at 70 years of age, she represented Ireland at the 2016 European Road Masters Championships in the Algarve. Over the years, Mary has volunteered in many groups and organisations and in recent years she became involved with Age friendly Limerick as the chair of Limerick Older Peoples Council, and the National Chair of Older Peoples Councils of Ireland.

When COVID 19 raised its ugly head last year, Mary wanted to contribute, and with support from Age Friendly Limerick, she set up and ran a friendly call service.

“Reaching Out, Staying Connected” where she made regular phone calls to check in on other older people, to have a chat and see how they were coping with having to cocoon. Mary made more than fifty calls per week.

She is eager to continue to support the work of the Age Friendly Programme in Galway.



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## Liam Curran

Liam Curran is a proud Claddagh man. He loves to reminisce and tell stories about the old days of Galway and about his father Patrick Curran who was King of the Claddagh. He is just as proud of his home in the city centre –and since moving there 6 years ago he has become an important figure in his community. He quickly got to know his neighbours and after some encouragement, took on the role of chairperson of the local residents association.

He recognises the importance of community and the benefits of belonging. He was instrumental in the development of a community room for residents to meet, and an outdoor exercise area, and he calls on neighbours regularly, especially if he hasn't seen them out and about in a while.

Liam can often be seen watering the plants, sweeping and picking weeds. He's the go-to man in the community when there's a maintenance problem and he's helped organise many improvement works for residents such as painting, window cleaning, lighting and community clean up days. Throughout the COVID restrictions, Liam and his neighbour Peter Norman used their free time to develop the communal garden for all residents to enjoy, along with a bag of potatoes for everyone after the harvest!

In 2018 he received a Mayors Award for his dedication in leading and supporting the residents in his community, a well deserved recognition for the work he does. Liam is 66 years old.



# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Deirdre Dooley

Deirdre Dooley is 68 years old and lives in Castlepark, Ballybane. Deirdre has three children and eight grandchildren, ranging in age from 22 to 11 years. They are all hugely proud of their granny and her achievements over the years.

Deirdre has set a phenomenal example to her family in her positivity and her lust for life. About 25 years ago she returned to education as an adult learner, undertaking a range of courses such as computer skills, facilitation, Irish, history, and arts. She successfully completed a Diploma in Community Development and Education with GRETB and NUI Galway receiving a distinction, and she continues to upskill and learn to this day.

Deirdre has contributed so much to the community of Ballybane and the wider city over the past four decades. She has been an active member of Macnas since 2003, a member of Ala the community based Drama group for over 10 years, and was very active with the Eastside Craft Group for 20 years. She was also a member of the Ballybane Community Forum and represented the needs of people from the community at the Galway City Community Network. Deirdre is currently a member of the Ballybane Community Garden and undertook the role of chairperson with the garden for two years.

The impact Deirdre has had on her family, friends and on her community is huge!





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## Tom Foote

Often to be found around the docks in Galway, where his son, Adrian keeps his Sigma 33 sailing boat Meteor, 86 year old Tom, continues with his lifelong passion for the sea and sailing. "it's what keeps me young", he says with a wry grin. "That, and not taking myself too seriously."

Hailing from Crosshaven in Cork, he grew up with the sea and boats so it was no surprise to his parents when he opted for a career in the Merchant Navy . As a young Radio officer, he roamed the world one that was still big and full of adventure, without the advent of mass airline travel.

Tom lives with his wife, Hilary and their Schnauzer, Winston. He has a son and daughter, Adrian and AnnMarie and now there are five grandchildren.

During his retirement he pursued a lifelong desire to write. He has had two novels published in the USA. "Undertow" in 1997 and "Walk with the Devil" in 2013. He also developed an interest in amateur radio and devoted time to making contact around the world by high frequency radio using the Morse code as his primary means of communication.

On ageing, his advice would be, "Just stay young, as long as you can. Take life on the chin and above all, don't take it too seriously!"



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## Mary Kyne

Mary Kyne moved to Oughterard in 1967, a retired primary school teacher, she has always been involved in many ways in the community. Mary is a Mother of seven children and has eighteen grandchildren.

A founding member of the award winning Oughterard Heritage website, Mary assisted the committee with the restoration of significant building Oughterard. Mary is the leading member of the Oughterard Senior Citizens group, who she kept together throughout the pandemic calling and checking in on people, and they have now resumed meeting under her care. She also assisted with Meals on wheels for ten years.

Another of Mary's great passions is walking, being actively involved in the Oughterard Ramblers walking group for over twenty years. Mary assisted in setting up two award winning walks within the area and she has led groups going abroad to places like Turkey, Russia, Sri Lanka, Rome, Sicily, Madeira and lots of others. As if all this wasn't enough Mary was also the secretary of the Retired Teachers Association of Ireland for thirteen years, and in 2020 was the President of the association, and she plays golf and bridge.

There are very few people in Oughterard who don't know Mary and admire her enthusiasm and immense community spirit.



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## Joan Kavanagh

Joan Kavanagh has been a pro-active and dedicated volunteer in the community over many years across a wide range of voluntary organizations in Galway. These included parents councils, sports, community council, residents associations, the Arts, social care, children, local government and legislative bodies.

For the last 7 years Joan has been Chairperson of the Galway City and County Age Friendly Older Persons Council. She developed and coordinated the project for the Directory of Services for Older People in Galway City and County, and she also continues to advocate for developing age friendly businesses in Galway City, and an age friendly Galway university.

Joan has at all times promoted volunteerism, and healthy and active ageing, as she believes they benefit both the volunteer and the organization, and Joan was instrumental in establishing the Galway Volunteer Centre where she worked as the development manager for the two years.

Joan is a member of Galway Golf Club for 50 years. She has served on several committees there over the years including being Lady Captain, and she also plays bridge. Joan believes in exercising for healthy living so she practices yoga, walking, exercises online, and promote exercise with certain groups in the community, and is on the steering committee of Healthy Galway. Joan has 5 children and 5 grandchildren.





# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Andrew Linnane

Andrew Linnane, aged 84, is from Ballinderreen, Co. Galway and after working in London in the Mental Healthcare Sector for over forty years, he returned home where he has embraced modern technology to keep in contact with his family living there, through email and video calls on his iPad. Indeed, he plays his favourite YouTube music on it as he cooks his meals and he is adept at online banking too. Returning back to Ballinderreen over 20 years ago, he lives alone but remains very active through cycling, walking and sea swimming each day. Andrew loves being out and about in the open air and he can be seen helping to maintain the local graveyard and assist with activities in Ballinderreen Community Centre and Ballinderreen GAA Club.

A keen horticulturist, his garden is always blooming in the colours of the season and he generously shares his knowledge with the local Tidy Towns group where he is often seen using his trowel or spade. Andrew is a very good conversationalist and he has a great interest in history both local and international, after travelling to over fifty countries around the world during his lifetime. Staying active and staying alive is key to Andrew's positive attitude to life, helping others and maintaining a good circle of friends to chat to, is what he likes most. His motto is that it is better to wear out than to rust out!



# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Annie Mc Donagh

Annie Mc Donagh is a 63 year old woman and lives in Ballinfoyle on the Headford road. Annie is a member of the Traveller Community who was nomadic and lived in different parts of Galway City and County in the earliest years of her life, and then moved to Munster Avenue where she continued living until she got married. Annie had 10 in her family with 9 living, and has 26 grandchildren, ranging in age from 21 years to her latest grand child who is 6 weeks old. They are all very proud of their granny and all her achievements over the years.

Annie has set a phenomenal example to her family on her positivity and her lust for life. In 2018 Annie returned to education and did a diploma course level 7 in NUI Galway in Community Development, receiving her diploma in 2019 along with 23 other members of the Traveller Community.

Annie works with the Galway Traveller Movement on the peer led primary health Care programme where she delivers health information to the Traveller community. She advocates and supports members of the Traveller community to access their rights and challenge discrimination in health and other related areas. Annie is a great Ambassador for the Traveller Community and is a great role model for her family and grandchildren.





# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Venetia McEllin

Venetia McEllin has lived in Headford for 50 years and has been the unknown name behind many groups and initiatives, creating a huge legacy in the community. She beavers away quietly in the background, initially reaching out to women in the community by setting up the Headford Women's Group 40 years ago - a group where women supported, made friends, learned skills and built on their self esteem unknowingly!! This group is still going strong today.

Venetia was centrally involved in the Solas Family Resource Centre and then the Headford Environment Group, where she has been the prime mover and shaker for over ten years. The development of Sandybanks Lane as a biodiversity hotspot and walk, and the establishment of the Headford Community Orchard have become very popular venues for families and nature lovers. Venetia feels very strongly about preserving and cherishing our built and natural heritage and with the group, designed and erected the biodiversity signage in Headford. She believes that true community development happens when groups collaborate together and this is now happening in Headford. Venetia continually educated herself gaining a Diploma in Community Development age 45, a Diploma in Women's Studies aged 50, a year studying computers at age 53, followed by a degree in Fine Art.

She has dedicated nearly 50 years of hard, selfless work to the community, with the fruition of it very visible in the Headford area. Never seeking recognition she really is an unsung hero!





# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Gerry Folan

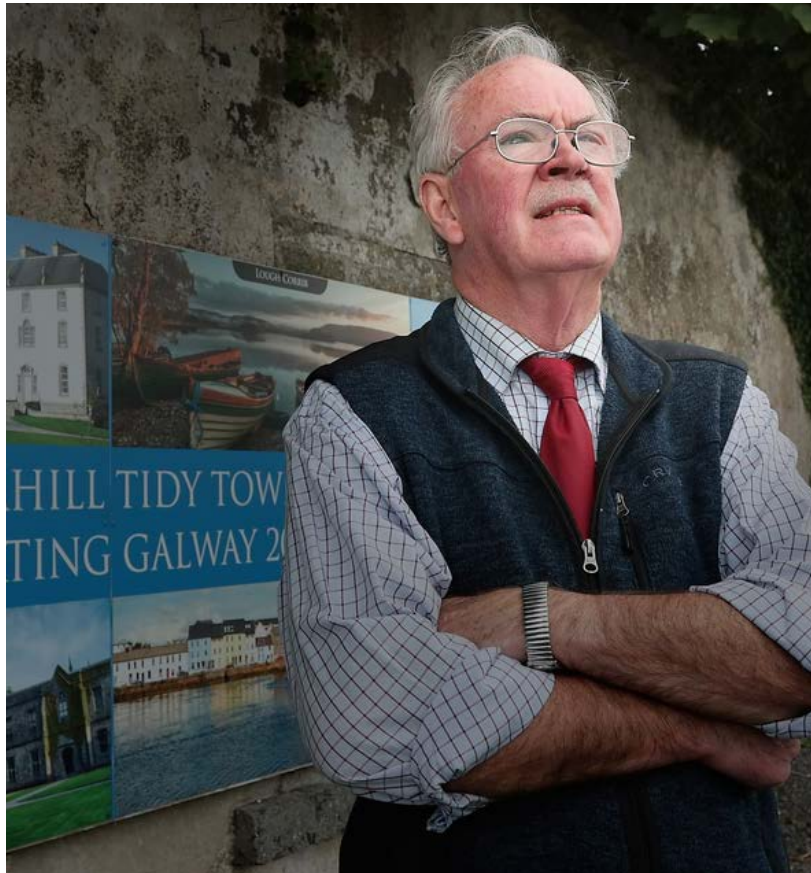
Gerry Folan is 70 years old and lives in Ard Alainn in Ballybane. Gerry has been an instrumental part of the Ballybane Community Garden since it opened 15 years ago. Anyone who is familiar with the Ballybane Garden immediately associates it with Gerry!! It is a very rare day that Gerry isn't there digging, weeding, watering, pruning and propagating.

Gerry was drawn to this type of volunteer work as he is passionate about climate change and the impact this change will have on all our lives. Gerry has worked tirelessly in the developing new ecosystems, increasing organic gardening which includes developing new ecosystems, increasing the green belt in the city and promoting home-grown nutritious foods.

Gerry has a particular love for birds and has a number of bird feeding areas in the garden which attracts a great range of birds to the area. He also supported the installation of a compost toilet in the garden, which he helps to maintain. He built water collection areas in the garden and has installed water butts to harvest the rain. Gerry always has a big welcome for new volunteers to the garden and guides and educates them in the skills of organic growing and harvesting. Over the years Gerry has helped organise many courses for garden members and people from the wider community in organic growing, pruning, willow planting, willow weaving, Basketmaking, basic woodwork and much more.



# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Michael McEvilly

Michael McEvilly has always been active in local politics and ever ready to lend a helping hand, where needed. In recent years, he initiated the instillation of pavements and lighting, along the N59 at Rosscahill, making life there a whole lot safer and enabling the community to interact more freely. Dog-walking and exercising are now regular features of this otherwise dangerous highway.

In 2015, Michael started Rosscahill Tidy Towns, to which he continues to devote a lot of his time. From weeding to clearing up litter, cutting grass to clipping back foliage and the periodic orchestration of groups for a general tidy-up, the work is never ending. Planter boxes, neatly painted, have been installed, providing colour and delight for locals and tourists alike. Pollinator plants are part of the mix. Always on the look-out for new recruits and sources of funding, no opportunity is missed! Retirement is not part of the equation for Michael!



# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Billy Mulvihill

Billy Mulvihill, at 68 years young, is a great believer in active and positive ageing. He is the cofounder of an award winning model of social enterprise with two organizations. Independent Living Ireland supports older people and those with disabilities all over the country with assistive technologies. The profit from the sale of these products and services are redistributed to support community development projects through the Amicitia social hub in Athenry. This space brings the community of Athenry together to run events such as pottery and theatre workshops, BBQs, craft markets and fundraising coffee mornings. Most recently, this work was recognised by Rethink Ireland as a winner of their prestigious Social Enterprise Development Fund.

Billy is passionate about creating positive social change by bringing joy and support to those that need it most. Along with this strong sense of community he is also a family man with four children and four grandchildren living in different corners of the world. A coffee lover, he enjoys nothing more than gathering together with friends and family to swap stories, build relationships and share moments of happiness.





# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



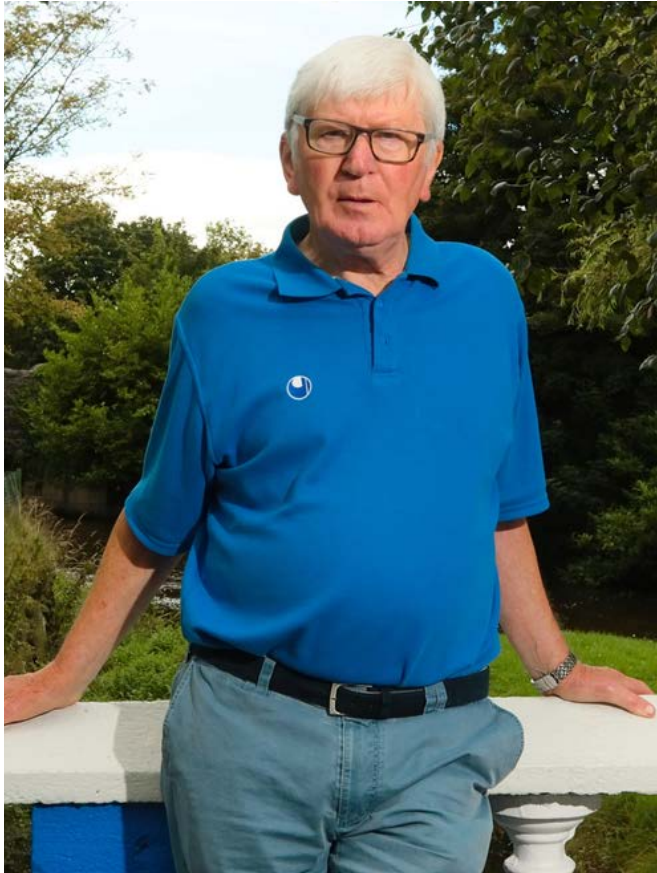
## Valerie Pointer

Valerie Pointer has lived in the Ballinfoile area of Galway for over 18 years, and has been a strong advocate for the improvement of facilities and services for people in the area. She was instrumental in establishing the Baile An Chóiste Residents association and served as its chairperson for over 15 years, and she also played a key role on the committee for the development of the Ballinfoile Castlegar Neighbourhood Centre.

Valerie volunteered with Enable Ireland for over 10 years including a two-year role managing the Enable Ireland Charity Shop and she also volunteered with COPE Galway. Valerie's positive attitude, endless energy and passion for life has touched so many people in the area and in the wider Galway community over the years. She is always willing to step in when needed, she has many friends in the area, and she makes sure to keep in touch with them. Every year she organises a weekly coffee morning for the Bothar An Chóiste Women's Group, as well as a variety of activities that women from the area can participate in. She is a real people person and loves chatting and swapping stories about life experiences as well as being a skilful seamstress and knitter. During Covid Valerie took part in many online classes to stay connected with other people and learn new skills. The Ballinfoile community are very fortunate to have Valerie, aged 71, living in the heart of the community.



# Positive Ageing Week 2021 Local Heroes



## Tony Murphy

Tony Murphy is and has always been a very active member of his local community in Milltown. He is a member of Milltown Tidy Towns and a founding member of Milltown Heritage Society. Indeed, Tony is very involved in several award-winning heritage projects including the 'Gastronomy Heritage Project' and 'Milltown Heritage Audit'.

He is Vice President of Milltown GAA and has been involved down through the years in all aspects of his local GAA club including coaching and the provision of facilities for the community. Tony is Chairman of the Church Finance Committee and has been involved with the committee for over 20 years. He is an active member of Milltown Walking Group and likes to explore the hidden heritage of our country. Tony has been involved with Galway County Council's Third World Fund for over 30 years.

Tony is patron of Milltown Drama Group. As well as his very valuable contributions to his community Tony also gives a lot of time and energy to his family, assisting with childminding and going to see his grandchildren's matches and supporting them from the sideline. He does all this despite having to deal with Parkinson's disease for the past 17 years.



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## Michéal Smyth

What can you say about Michéal Smyth that truly captures the energetic, engaged and resilient 84 old that he is? Father of three, grandad of six, sports enthusiast, educationalist, passionately interested in politics and music. He is a person of many dimensions. Michéal is a Mayo man. He was a secondary school teacher in his working life and taught in many schools from Achill to Dublin- a job he greatly enjoyed. The young people kept him 'awake and alive'.

A regular attender at the Croí Na Gaillimhe lunch and social club for the last three years, Michéal greatly enjoys the company, good food and the craic. He and his buddy Pat can often be heard re-running the weekend's GAA football and hurling matches over their lunch.

Michéal lost his sight completely and unexpectedly 2 years ago. Adjusting to this life changing situation would have phased most people. Michéal's acceptance of his blindness and the way he negotiates his new life is inspiring. He actively engages with all the activities in Croí Na Gaillimhe. He goes for a daily walk 6 times around his local park, listens to radio and audio books and thanks to Google he can search for anything from telephone numbers to current affairs. What else can you say about Michéal Smyth - Whatta guy!!!

